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ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION OF KING EDWARD THE SEVENTH

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION OF KING EDWARD VII

BY WILLIAM WATSON

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ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

SIRE, we have looked on many and mighty things
In these eight hundred summers of renown
Since the Gold Dragon of the Wessex Kings
On Hastings field went down ;
And slowly in the ambience of this crown
Have many crowns been gathered, till, to-day,
How many peoples crown thee, who shall say?
Time, and the ocean, and some fostering star,

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

In high cabal have made us what we are,
Who stretch one hand to Huron's bearded pines,
And one on Kashmir's snowy shoulder lay,
And round the streaming of whose raiment shines
The iris of the Australasian spray.
For waters have connived at our designs,
And winds have plotted with us—and behold,
Kingdom in kingdom, sway in oversway,

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

Dominion fold in fold:
Like to that immemorial regal stone
Thy namesake from the northland reft away,
Symbol of sovereignty and spoil of fray,
And closed in England's throne.
So wide of girth this little cirque of gold,
So great we are, and old.
Proud from the ages are we come, O King;

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

Proudly, as fits a nation that hath now
So many dawns and sunsets on her brow,
This duteous heart we bring.

II

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

The kings thy far forerunners; he that came
And smote us into greatness; he whose fame,
In dark armipotence and ivied pride,
Towers above Conway's tide,
And where Carnarvon ponders on the sea;
He, that adventurous name,
Who left at Agincourt the knightly head
Of France and all its charging plumes o'erthrown,

But hath with royal-hearted chivalry
In Shakespeare's conquests merged at last his own;
And she, a queen, but fashioned king-like, she
Before whose prows, before whose tempests, fled
Spain on the ruining night precipitately;
And that worn face, in camps and councils bred,
The guest who brought us law and liberty
Raised well-nigh from the dead;

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

Yea, she herself, in whose immediate stead
Thou standest, in the shadow of her soul;
All these, O King, from their seclusion dread,
And guarded palace of eternity,
Mix in thy pageant with phantasmal tread,
Hear the long waves of acclamation roll,
And with yet mightier silence marshal thee
To the awful throne thou hast inherited.

III

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

High on the noon and summit of the year
Thou art anointed king.
Nature disdains not braveries: why should we
The sombre foil to all her splendours be?
Let London rustle with rich apparelling,
And all the ways, with festal faces lined,
Casement and coign and fluttering balcony,
Wave welcome on the wind.

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

Now the loud land flames with imperial gear,
And life itself, so late in hues austere
And the cold reign of iron custom bound,
Puts off its gray subjection, and is here
One moment throned and crowned.
Now the long glories prance and triumph by:
And now the pomps have passed, and we depart
Each to the peace or strife of his own heart:

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

And now the day whose bosom was so high
Sinks billowing down: and twilight sorceries change
Into remote and strange
What is most known and nigh:
And changelessly the river sends his sigh
Down leagues of hope and fear, and pride and shame,

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

And life and death; dim-journeying passionless
To where broad estuary and beaconing ness
Look toward the outlands whence our fathers came.
And high on Druid mountains hath the sun
Flamed valediction, as the last lights died
Beyond that fatal wave, that from our side
Sunders the lovely and the lonely Bride
That we have wedded but have never won.

IV

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

And night falls on an isle whose vassal seas
Remember not her prone regalities,
So withered from belief, so far and faint,
In such abjection before Time they lie,
Kingdoms and thrones forgotten of the sky.
Deira with her sea-face to the morn,
And Cumbria sunset-gazing; moist Divnaint,
A realm of coombs and tors; old greatnesses

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

From Dee to Severn, where the bards were born
Whose songs are in the wind by Idris' chair,
Whose lips won battles; and seats of puissance
where,
With long grope of his desultory hand,
The ocean, prying deep into the land,
By Morvern and the legends of wild Lorn,

Repents him, lost about Locheil: all these
Have been, and stablisht on their dust we stand;
Thy England; with the northern sister fair,
That hath the heath-bells in her blowing hair;
And the dark mountain maid
That dreams for ever in the wizard shade,
Hymning her heroes there.

V

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

O doom of overlordships! to decay
First at the heart, the eye scarce dimmed at all;
Or perish of much cumber and array,
The burdening robe of empire, and its pall;
Or, of voluptuous hours the wanton prey,
Die of the poisons that most sweetly slay;
Or, from insensate height,
With prodigies, with light

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

Of trailing angers on the monstrous night,
Magnificently fall.
Far off from her that bore us be such fate,
And vain against her gate
Its knocking. But by chinks and crannies, Death,
Forbid the doorways, oft-times entereth.
Let her drink deep of discontent, and sow

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

Abroad the troubling knowledge. Let her show
Whence glories come, and wherefore glories go,
And what indeed are glories, unto these
'Twixt labour and the rest that is not ease
Made blank and darksome; who have hardly
heard
Sound of her loftiest names, or any word
Of all that hath in gold been said and sung,

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

Since him of April heart and morning tongue,
Her ageless singing-bird.
For now the day is unto them that know,
And not henceforth she stumbles on the prize;
And yonder march the nations full of eyes.
Already is doom a-spinning, if unstirred
In leisure of ancient pathways she lose touch
Of the hour, and overmuch

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

Recline upon achievement, and be slow
To take the world arriving, and forget
How perilous are the stature and port that so
Invite the arrows, how unslumbering all
The hates that watch and crawl.
Nor must she, like the others, yield up yet
The generous dreams! but rather live to be
Saluted in the hearts of men as she

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION

Of high and singular election, set
Benignant on the mitigated sea;
That greatly loving freedom loved to free,
And was herself the bridal and embrace
Of strength and conquering grace.

THE POETICAL WORKS OF WILLIAM WATSON, PUBLISHED BY JOHN LANE, AT THE BODLEY HEAD, 67 VTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

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